

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

ARCADIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NO. 2014060827

ORDER OF DETERMINATION OF
SUFFICIENCY OF DUE PROCESS
COMPLAINT

On June 16, 2014, Student filed a Due Process Hearing Request¹ (complaint) naming Arcadia Unified School District (District) as the respondent.

On July 1, 2014, District filed a Notice of Insufficiency (NOI) as to the complaint. As explained below, the complaint is sufficient.

APPLICABLE LAW

The named parties to a due process hearing request have the right to challenge the sufficiency of the complaint.² The party filing the complaint is not entitled to a hearing unless the complaint meets the requirements of Title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

A complaint is sufficient if it contains: (1) a description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to the proposed initiation or change concerning the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the child; (2) facts relating to the problem; and (3) a proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time.³ These requirements prevent vague and confusing complaints, and promote fairness by providing the

¹ A request for a due process hearing under Education Code section 56502 is the due process complaint notice required under Title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A).

² 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b) & (c).

³ 20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii)(III) & (IV).

named parties with sufficient information to know how to prepare for the hearing and how to participate in resolution sessions and mediation.⁴

The complaint provides enough information when it provides “an awareness and understanding of the issues forming the basis of the complaint.”⁵ The pleading requirements should be liberally construed in light of the broad remedial purposes of the IDEA and the relative informality of the due process hearings it authorizes.⁶ Whether the complaint is sufficient is a matter within the sound discretion of the Administrative Law Judge.⁷

DISCUSSION

The facts alleged in Student’s complaint are sufficient to put the District on notice of the issues forming the basis of the complaint. Student’s complaint alleges that District denied Student a free appropriate public education (FAPE) by inappropriately assessing him, denying parents’ request for an independent educational evaluation, and by making an inappropriate offer of placement and services. The complaint alleges that after two years of home-schooling, Student was assessed by District in December 2013 and re-enrolled in District in January 2014. At individualized education program (IEP) team meetings on January 8 and 13, 2014, parents objected to District’s offer of placement and services, and requested an independent assessment. Thereafter, parents obtained an independent assessment for which they seek reimbursement. Parents also seek a placement at a non-public school. Thus, the complaint identifies the issues and adequate related facts about the problem, and proposed resolutions to the problems, sufficient to permit District to respond to the complaint and participate in a resolution session and mediation. Therefore, Student’s statement of the claims is sufficient.

⁴ See, H.R.Rep. No. 108-77, 1st Sess. (2003), p. 115; Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, 1st Sess. (2003), pp. 34-35.

⁵ Sen. Rep. No. 108-185, *supra*, at p. 34.

⁶ *Alexandra R. v. Brookline School Dist.* (D.N.H., Sept. 10, 2009, No. 06-cv-0215-JL) 2009 WL 2957991 at p.3 [nonpub. opn.]; *Escambia County Board of Educ. v. Benton* (S.D.Ala. 2005) 406 F. Supp.2d 1248, 1259-1260; *Sammons v. Polk County School Bd.* (M.D. Fla., Oct. 28, 2005, No. 8:04CV2657T24EAJ) 2005 WL 2850076 at p. 3[nonpub. opn.] ; but cf. *M.S.-G. v. Lenape Regional High School Dist.* (3d Cir. 2009) 306 Fed.Appx. 772, at p. 3[nonpub. opn.].

⁷ Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities, 71 Fed.Reg. 46540-46541, 46699 (Aug. 14, 2006).

ORDER

1. The complaint is sufficient under Title 20 United States Code section 1415(b)(7)(A)(ii).
2. All mediation, prehearing conference, and hearing dates in this matter are confirmed.

DATE: July 07, 2014

/s/

JUNE R. LEHRMAN
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings